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ABSTRACT

The Seward Park Family Literacy Program was an Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title VII-funded project in its second year of operation at Seward Park High School in Manhattan (New York). In 1992-93 the program served Cantonese-, Mandarin-, and Spanish-speaking adults of limited English proficiency with instruction in English as a second language (ESL) and a course to increase their knowledge of the school system and its resources. They were also offered information on the prevention of AIDS. In addition, they were offered the opportunity to attend the Summer Parent Center. The program met its objectives in improving English reading and writing skills and increasing parental knowledge of the school system. It partially met its objectives for improving English conversation skills. Objectives for increasing parent attendance at school activities could not be measured. Evaluation recommendations include exploring additional techniques to increase student acquisition of English conversational skills and providing complete pre- and post-survey data on participation in school activities for complete evaluation. Three tables present evaluation findings. Appendixes list instructional materials and class schedules. (SLD)

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OREA Report

The Seward Park Family Literacy Program
Family English Literacy Grant Number T003J10002
FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
1992-93

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The Seward Park Family Literacy Program
Family English Literacy Grant Number T003J10002
FINAL EVALUATION REPORT
1992-93

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Seward Park Family Literacy Program was an Elementary and Secondary Education Act (E.S.E.A.) Title VII-funded project in its second year of operation at Seward Park High School in Manhattan. In the year under review, the Family Literacy Program served Cantonese-, Mandarin-, and Spanish-speaking adults of limited English proficiency (LEP). Participating students received instruction in English as a second language (E.S.L.) and were offered a course to increase their knowledge of the school system and the resources within this system that were available to them and their children. They were also offered information on AIDS prevention. Additionally, participants were to have the opportunity to attend the Summer Parent Center to continue their studies beyond the school year.

Project teachers had the opportunity to attend staff development meetings throughout the year as well as national and state bilingual education conferences.

The Seward Park Family Literacy Program met its evaluation objectives for improving English reading and writing skills and increasing parental knowledge of the American school system. It partially met its objective for improving English conversational skills. OREA could not measure the objective for increasing parental attendance at school activities because the project did not provide the required data.

The conclusions, based on the findings of this evaluation, lead to the following recommendations to the project:

- Explore additional techniques to increase Level II students' acquisition of English conversational skills.

- Provide OREA with complete pre- and post-survey data on participation in school activities so that it can fully evaluate the parental involvement objective.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This report documents the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment s (OREA's) evaluation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (E.S.E.A.) Title VII-funded project, the Seward Park Family Literacy Program.

PROJECT CONTEXT

The project operated at Seward Park High School in Manhattan. The population in the surrounding community was mainly Chinese, Latino, and European-American. Most residents had low incomes.

The student population at Seward Park High School for the 1991-92 school year (the last year for which this information was available), was ethnically diverse. Of the 3,054 students who registered, 46 percent were Latino, 36 percent were Asian-American, 15 percent were African-American, and 2 percent were European-American.* Forty-one percent of these students were of limited English proficiency (LEP), and 44 percent came from low-income families.

Seward Park High School is housed in a relatively old building (constructed in 1930). A visit by the OREA evaluation consultant found that some classrooms had broken lights, peeling paint, and graffiti carved into desk tops. However, the hallways were well-decorated with students' work, and bilingual program announcements were centrally displayed.

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*Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS

The project served Cantonese-, Mandarin-, and Spanish-speaking parents, guardians, and adult relatives of students enrolled in bilingual education programs at Seward Park High School. Most were recent immigrants to the United States from China or Latin America.

The school year was divided into three terms. During Term I, the project served a total of 186 students; male students numbered 52 (28 percent), and female 134 (72 percent). Students whose native language was Chinese numbered 94 (51 percent); those whose native language was Spanish numbered 90 (48 percent); and those whose native language was unspecified numbered 2 (1 percent).

During Term II, the project served a total of 137 students; male students numbered 38 (28 percent), and female 99 (72 percent). Students whose native language was Chinese numbered 66 (48 percent); those whose native language was Spanish numbered 68 (50 percent); and those whose native language was unspecified numbered 3 (2 percent).

During Term III, the project served a total of 140 students; male students numbered 32 (23 percent), and female 108 (77 percent). Students whose native language was Chinese numbered 69 (49 percent); those whose native language was Spanish numbered 67 (48 percent); and those whose native language was unspecified numbered 4 (3 percent).

Participants worked long hours in garment industry sweatshops and restaurants at low wages even though some had advanced professional degrees in

their native countries.

Needs Assessment

Before instituting the project, Seward Park High School conducted a needs assessment of the targeted students as well as of the educational staff who were to serve them. The data obtained from these studies indicated two primary needs: (1) to provide the parents, guardians, and adult relatives of LEP students enrolled in bilingual education programs with intensive English language instruction; and (2) to provide these adults with useful information on the United States school system in order to improve their children's school performance and educational opportunities.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- By June 1993, 75 percent of the project participants enrolled in E.S.L. Conversation I, E.S.L. Conversation II, or E.S.L. Conversation III classes will demonstrate improved English conversational skills.
- By June 1993, 75 percent of the project participants enrolled in E.S.L. Literacy I, E.S.L. Literacy II, or E.S.L. Literacy III classes will demonstrate improved English skills in reading and writing.
- By June 1993, 75 percent of the program participants will show an increased understanding of their children's school organization and curriculum, citizenship, and other survival issues.
- By June 1993, program participants will show increased involvement in school activities as measured by attendance records for parent meetings and a pre- and post-program survey on participation in school activities.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

During the 1992-93 school year, the Family Literacy Program provided instructional and support services to Cantonese-, Mandarin- and Spanish-speaking

parents, guardians, and adult relatives of LEP students at Seward Park High School. The project's main goals were to promote the acquisition of English language skills and increase knowledge of the programs and opportunities available to bilingual children of recent immigrants within the school system.

The project offered parental involvement activities and in-service staff development activities. A Summer Parent Center funded by the project and the Board of Education of the City of New York was to be offered in the summer of 1993. Intensive English as a second language (E.S.L.) and American culture and citizenship classes were to be taught five days per week for four weeks.

Materials, Methods, and Techniques

The project offered E.S.L. two periods per week at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. A course entitled "Parent, Child, and School" was also offered and was integrated into the E.S.L. classes.

Teachers of participating students used a wide array of strategies and techniques, including guided conversations and group discussions about family histories, personal and immigration experiences, role-playing, paired activities and peer correction of work, practice at filling out forms, sound and pattern drills, and visual aids. The project used textbooks, workbooks, and handouts for classroom instruction. As part of a pilot program, computers supplemented classroom instruction at the intermediate level.

At the beginning and intermediate levels of E.S.L., teachers focused on basic survival vocabulary, while at the more advanced levels, project participants increased

their vocabulary as they learned more about the school system and the availability of special programs and opportunities for themselves and their children. Topics included curricula and graduation requirements at Seward Park High School and supportive home environments for learning. AIDS prevention was also discussed.

The project held a graduation ceremony at the end of the school year and presented certificates of program completion to graduates. Winners of attendance and achievement awards at each of the three levels received the *Oxford E.S.L. Dictionary*. The ceremony not only offered a means to reward achievement but also encouraged student achievement and attendance by its presentation of successful participants as role models.

The Family Literacy Program developed materials for the beginning level of E.S.L., and a questionnaire and other materials for the "Parent, Child, and the School" course. Project staff also published and disseminated an annual Seward Park Family English Literacy Newsletter.

For a list of instructional materials used in the project, please see Appendix A.

Capacity building. During the summer of 1993, the Board of Education of the City of New York planned to provide a Summer Parent Center for project participants. The project director indicated that she would request funds from the Board and the State Education Department to continue the program.

Staff Qualifications

Title VII Staff. All staff, which included the project director, a trainer, six teachers, and seven paraprofessionals, were funded by Title VII. For a description of

degrees held and language competencies (teaching or communicative proficient*), see Table 1.

The project director's responsibilities included administering the project, supervising staff, acting as liaison with the project and school administration, and supplying evaluation data. The trainer's responsibilities were to train teachers and paraprofessionals and coordinate staff development activities with curricula. Paraprofessionals assisted teachers in the classroom and interpreted and translated for students at the beginning level E.S.L classes.

Staff development. Project staff participated in a series of meetings and workshops at Seward Park High School. These focused on program goals and administration, test design and administration, curriculum development, and computer-assisted instruction (C.A.I.) in adult E.S.L. Staff attended two bilingual education conferences.

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*Teaching proficiency (TP) is defined as the ability to use LEP students' native language in teaching language arts or other academic subjects. Communicative proficiency (CP) is defined as a non-native speaker's basic ability to communicate and interact with students in their native language.

TABLE 1

Project Staff Qualifications

Position Title	Degree(s)	Certificate(s)/ License(s)	Language Competence
Project Director	M.A.	*	Cantonese (TP), Mandarin (TP)
Trainer	M.A.	*	Swedish (CP), Norwegian (CP)
Teacher	M.S.	*	Mandarin (TP)
Teacher	M.A.	*	Mandarin (TP), Spanish (TP)
Teacher	M.S.	*	Spanish (TP)
Teacher	M.A.	*	Mandarin (TP)
Teacher	M.A.	*	Mandarin (TP)
Teacher	M.A.	*	Mandarin (TP)
Paraprofessional	B.A.	*	Spanish
Paraprofessional	H.S. diploma	*	Spanish
Paraprofessional	H.S. diploma	*	Spanish
Paraprofessional	H.S. diploma	*	Cantonese
Paraprofessional	H.S. diploma	*	Cantonese
Paraprofessional	H.S. diploma	*	Cantonese, Mandarin
Paraprofessional	H.S. diploma	*	Cantonese

* Data not provided.

Instructional Time Spent on Particular Tasks

See Appendix B for examples of class schedules.

Length of Time Participants Received Instruction

Project participants received six hours of instruction per week.

PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

The entire program was one of parent and community involvement. The project sponsored a variety of activities to involve participants in the education of their children. These activities included parent workshops at national and statewide bilingual education conferences and the course "Parent, Child, and the School." Additionally, project staff members published and disseminated an annual Seward Park Family English Literacy Program Newsletter informing the community about project goals and activities.

PARTICIPANTS' EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS

The Seward Park Family Literacy Program carried out all instructional activities specified in its original design.

Participants' Progress in English.

Throughout the school year, students had ample opportunity to develop their English language skills.

The OREA evaluation consultant visited a Level I (beginning) E.S.L. class of 11 Cantonese- and Spanish-speaking project participants at Seward Park High School. The classroom facilities had several problems including a cracked ceiling with peeling paint, graffiti on the walls and carved into desk tops, and broken overhead lights. The class was working on developing basic English literacy and conversational skills. The lesson combined teacher-directed and cooperative learning interaction patterns. The instructional method used in class was the whole language approach. Project participants read aloud excerpts from their workbooks of practical, everyday conversation and then translated these excerpts into their native language. Participants divided into groups to read dialogues from the English workbook to one another.

A Level I (beginning) E.S.L. class of 18 Spanish-speaking project participants observed by the OREA evaluation consultant was offered in a classroom that was in as poor a state of repair as the classroom discussed above. The class emphasized the development of conversational skills in English. The lesson was teacher-directed

and used the whole language instructional method. Students volunteered to construct sentences incorporating new vocabulary. The teacher wrote these sentences on the blackboard and the rest of the class corrected any mistakes. The teacher presented a lesson on the simple present tense, and project participants then asked each other questions using this tense. Later, participants practiced aloud by reading dialogues from the workbook with a partner. During the lesson, the paraprofessional offered help and corrected written work.

The OREA evaluation consultant observed a Level II (intermediate) E.S.L. class of nine Cantonese-, Mandarin-, and Spanish-speaking project participants. The lesson used computer assisted instruction (C.A.I.) to improve English literacy; level II participants received C.A.I. for one and one half hours per week. The computer lab contained computers and printers; a few computers needed repair, as did several overhead lights. The lesson was individually paced and used the software program "Plato 2,000," which is an interactive package for beginning to advanced levels. Participants work with compound nouns, sentence structure, participle phrases, and types of verbs. The teacher and paraprofessional clarified, translated, and interpreted instructions for students as needed. The computer automatically recorded the participants' scores in their files and only allowed them to progress to higher levels of instruction after they had completed a review lesson.

A second Level II (intermediate) E.S.L. class of seven Cantonese- and Mandarin-speaking project participants observed by the OREA evaluation consultant was virtually identical to the first.

The project proposed two evaluation objectives for English as a second language:

- By June 1993, 75 percent of the project participants enrolled in E.S.L. Conversation I, E.S.L. Conversation II, or E.S.L. Conversation III classes will demonstrate improved English conversational skills.

The project offered three levels of the English conversational course, but only participants in the second and third levels took the Oral Basic English Skills Placement Test. Of the 110 students at Level II with matched pre- and posttest scores, 70 (63.9 percent) demonstrated an improvement in English conversational skills. At Level III, there were 72 students with matched pre- and posttest scores, and 67 of them (93.1 percent) demonstrated an improvement in English conversational skills. (See Table 2.)

The project partially met its objective for improvement of English conversational skills. In the previous year, the project met this objective.

TABLE 2

Pretest/Posttest Differences on the
Oral Basic English Skills Placement Test, by Level

Level	Number of Students	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	Percent Increase
II	110	13.35	14.75	63.6
III	72	21.21	36.33	93.1

- By June 1993, 75 percent of the project participants enrolled in E.S.L. Literacy I, E.S.L. Literacy II, or E.S.L. Literacy III classes will demonstrate improved English skills in reading and writing.

There were complete pre- and posttest scores on the Written Basic English Skills Placement Test for 53 students. Of those, 40 (75.5 percent) demonstrated an increase.

The project met its objective for improvement of English reading and writing skills, as it did in the previous year.

OVERALL EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS ACHIEVED THROUGH PROJECT

Attendance

Project staff members telephoned participants if they did not attend two sessions in a row, in order to encourage them to return to class. Teachers announced test dates and special activities in advance and encouraged participants to attend. Additionally, participants with the highest attendance rates received awards at the graduation ceremonies.

The project did not propose an objective for attendance.

CASE STUDIES

Case I

L. emigrated to the United States from mainland China two years ago. She has been a participant in the project for one year. She was highly motivated and studied diligently. The project enabled L. to develop her English language skills and expand her social network. She hoped to use her new language skills and friends to pursue new and better employment opportunities outside of Chinatown.

Case II

N. emigrated from mainland China to the United States nine years ago. She rarely ventured outside of a narrow group of other Chinese immigrants because she did not understand English or how to deal with American currency. She relied on her husband to manage the responsibilities outside of the home and local community. N. enrolled in the project when her children started school and made good progress in English language skills that have helped her expand her horizons.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

Project staff participated in a series of meetings and workshops at Seward Park High School that focused on program goals and administration, test design and administration, curriculum development, and C.A.I. in E.S.L. for adults. Project staff also attended national and statewide bilingual education conferences.

The project did not propose an objective for staff development.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

In the year under review, project staff developed curriculum materials for beginning level E.S.L. classes and curriculum materials and a questionnaire for the "Parent, Child, and the School" class.

The project did not propose an objective for curriculum development.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT OUTCOMES

Project participants attended national and statewide bilingual education conferences where they participated in parent workshops on "Parents' Empowerment

in Education," "Conflict Resolution Skills for Asian Students: A Dialogue between Teachers and Parents," "Parental Leadership and Empowerment: A National Priority," and "High School Graduation Requirements and College Selection." Participants also discussed issues in relation to the schooling of their children. Teachers elicited active participation from participants, drawing heavily on their own experience as a means of helping them to understand their children's experience at Seward Park High School.

The project proposed two parental involvement objectives:

- By June 1993, 75 percent of the program participants will show an increased understanding of their children's school organization and curriculum, citizenship, and other survival issues.

There were complete pre- and posttest scores on the "Parent, Child, and the School" questionnaire for 106 students. Of those students, 95 (89.6 percent) demonstrated an increase from pre- to posttest scores. (See Table 3.)

The project met its evaluation objective for increasing parent knowledge of the American school system, as it did in the previous year.

TABLE 3

Pretest/Posttest Differences on the
"Parent, Child, and the School" Questionnaire

Number of Students	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	Percent Increase
106	11.26	15.53	89.6

- By June 1993, program participants will show increased involvement in school activities as measured by attendance records for parent meetings and a pre- and post-program survey on participation in school activities.

Attendance of project participants at parent meetings averaged 85 during the 1992-93 school year. The project did not provide data from the pre- and post-program survey on participation in school activities.

OREA was unable to evaluate the objective for increased attendance at school activities. In the previous year, the project partially met this objective.

IV. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

ACHIEVEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The Seward Park Family Literacy Program met its evaluation objectives for improving English reading and writing skills and increasing parental knowledge of the American school system. It partially met its objective for improving English conversational skills. OREA could not measure the objective for increasing parental attendance at school activities because the project did not provide the required data.

Participants in the project showed progress in the acquisition of English language skills as indicated by the written and oral components of the Basic English Skills Placement Test, although they did not make gains on the oral component in E.S.L. Conversation II at the rate projected. Only two classes are able to use the computer lab, and participants were very interested in acquiring computer skills. The project director hoped to provide more supplementary computer instruction in the future to facilitate acquisition of English language skills.

Project services also increased the participants' awareness of the importance of education for their children as indicated by higher posttest scores on the "Parent, Child, and the School" questionnaire. The project director stated that the "Parent, Child, and the School" course was useful but should be broadened from its narrow focus on Seward Park High School to include how the entire education system works and affects children. Additionally, it would be useful if this course incorporated information on college admission requirements, scholarship sources, and procedures in filing applications. The project director also felt that participants needed to learn

more about American culture, society, and government.

MOST AND LEAST EFFECTIVE COMPONENTS

The project director reported that the dedication of project teachers and enthusiasm of participants helped make the program highly effective. Participants were very conscientious about their studies, had a strong desire to learn English, and were respectful of and friendly with teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENHANCE PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

- Explore additional techniques to increase Level II students' acquisition of English conversational skills.
- Provide OREA with complete pre- and post-survey data on participation in school activities so that it can fully evaluate the parental involvement objective.

APPENDIX A

Instructional Materials

E.S.L. for Adults (Oral, Reading, Writing)

Title	Author	Publisher	Date of Publication
Basic Adult Survival English	Walsh	Prentice-Hall	1984
English for Adult Competency, II	Keltner & Bitterlin	Prentice-Hall/Regents	1990
E.S.L. Literacy	Nishio	Longman	1991
Essential Idioms in English	Dixson	Regents Publ. Co.	1983
Great American Stories, I	Draper	Prentice-Hall	1985
Home English Literacy for Parents	New Ed. Cooperative	OBEMLA	*
Lifeskills	Delippo	Addison-Wesley	1991
Photo Dictionary	Fuchs	Longman	1989
Picture Stories for Beginning Composition	Heyer	Regents	1983
Side by Side, I-III	Molinsky & Bliss	Prentice-Hall	1983
Side by Side Workbook, I & II	Molinsky & Bliss	Prentice-Hall	1983
Survival English	Morteller & Paul	Prentice-Hall/Regents	1985
Voices of Freedom, I	Bliss & Molinsky	Prentice-Hall/Regents	1989

* Information not submitted.

APPENDIX B

Class Schedules

Levels I-III

Days	Period	Subject
T & Th	5:30 - 6:30	E.S.L. (literacy)
T & Th	6:30 - 7:30	Parent, Child, and School
T & Th	7:30 - 8:30	E.S.L. (conversation)